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2/1/92

Dear Cyril,

Without having seen it I have no trouble agreeing that Stone's exploitation and commercialization of the JFK assassination is as you say a masterful work of art. I agree also that it has regenerated interest in the JFK assassination, although from my experience ~~it~~ that had gotten high again. He did add to that. Then you refer to another reinvestigation. This leads me to refer you to the two concluding paragraphs of my letter of 1/11.

There is no prospect of any meaningful reinvestigation as long as political figures have to survive politically what any real reinvestigation requires, an investigation of the FBI.

To what or who will those with this new "tremenduous interest in the JFK assassination" turn to learn more about it? Where can those anxious to learn get fact rather than theories none proven and most irresponsible?

To Mark Lane's newest fraud, atop the best-seller list and contracted for another movie?

To the Garrison reprint I think tops the paperbacks?

To Lifton's drek that again is selling so well? Need I name more?

Aside from his other evils that are numerous enough Stone has in fact created more frustration, the frustration you addressed with such magnificent eloquence to HSCA. (I referred a writer, Gerald Posner, to you about this just yesterday.) The people, most of whom did not believe the official mythology long before Stone, have no way or learning anything that can mean anything but many more of them are even more misinformed, misled and deceived by the Stones, the Lanes and the others.

Under any circumstances it would have been close to impossible to get any kind of meaningful official action to nullify the Warren Report but those of us generally lumped together as critics, at least as far back as 25 years ago, are most responsible, beginning with Garrison insanities and irresponsibilities too many of us, myself included to begin with, trusted him at least in part because he was a prosecutor. (If you ever drive to see your son and daughter in Washington we are less than 10 minutes off your direct road back. I hope you can stop off if you do drive, for I'd like to see you again, show you the archive I have and tell you in detail what a monstrosity Garrison was about to pull in 1968 when I made it impossible for him. I can show you enough documentation of this, too.)

Almost 17 years ago there was a symposium at the NYU law school. I prepared a speech, something I rarely did, intending to cut it but was taken ill. Jim Lesar read it for me. In it, sometimes by name, sometimes without names but with obvious reference, I illustrated exactly how all the zany, self-seeking, commercializing or fanciful theories would lead to exactly wthat they did lead to with HSCA.

To begin with the members were deceived, misled and misinformed. They also were not

bright or wise. The resolution to create HSCA was so awful I had to show them how and why and then, nonlawyer that I am, had to revise it for them before it was offered, then passed!

On my first meeting with Dick Sprague I was convinced he was not going to conduct any serious of responsible JFK assassination investigation - he'd invited me in but asked me not a thing about it - and when he shunted me to his King assassination staff, they conninced me it had already been decided to affirm that official mythology. I could add much more on this but do not now take the time. I told Sprague that day exactly what would happen to him if he proceeded as he then was, Ken Brooten, later temporarily his successor was there, and the night it did happen he paid me the high compliment of phoning me to tell me that I was Merlin, remembering the future. It was nothing like that, much as I enjoyed that praise. It was simply common sense, subject-matter knowledge and my prior experiences, particularly as a Senate investigator and editor. I knew how Congress worked & acted.

So then we got Blakey. Lane appears to have been the genius who inflicted Sprague on us and our history. I do not know who dredged Blakey up. and what did Blakey do, undeterred by any of the members or staff? (And what a staff of nuts and incompetents for the most part!)

He made it obvious that they were going to support the official mythologies and his first public demonstration of this was how he began each hearing: with a narration stating what he said sertain critics had said about what the committee would address that day. Each and every hearing began this way. There is only one of us he never mentioned, me.

And of us all there is only one who undertook to expose what he was up to. In no case did I request anonymity and in many I was cited by name in the stories. Lardner knew me, knew he could depend on what I said, and I do not now recall whether he then came up or not. He might have. Several Times reporters spent days here. With them and with others I was able to see to it that in the future there would be a record for history about HSCA that could be consulted.

Which is what I did with Stone, regardless of what honors he gets and money he makes.

I agree with you that all possible documents should be disclosed. Do you know anyone who has rescued more from their official graves and oblivion?

But on this two cautions. One is that there will not be, as Stone promotes himself and his movie by saying, any smoking gun. The other is that even given what I have not found to be true, any real interest in the disclosed records, their sheer volume alone will frustrate the probability of any meaningful uses of them.

The papers just can't afford the time for their experienced reporters to examine such a volume of records and the authors all begin with their own theories and fancies.

And of the authors, not a single one has come to use the 250,000 JFK assassination records to which I give unsupervised access. Plus the use of our copier.

So is there any reasonable hope that any coming disclosures will really accomplish anything? Other than leaving a better record for those who in the future might invest the time? Assuming that there are scholars not corrupted in advance by the more readily avail-

able books? Or Stone's exploitation, of Lifton's in that medium?

When Kevin Walsh finally got past Stone's palace guard and showed him how he was lying in what he was saying about withheld records, serving his own and Mark Allen's perfectly proper interest in their efforts to get HSCA's records disclosed, he saved Stone from his own mendacity and gave him a real kicker with which to end his movie: demand the release of HSCA's records.

Which are much less than advertised. All the records it got from the executive agencies are within FOIA and Mark Allen, represented by Jim Lesar, has now about 80,000 pages of them from the FBI and about 3,500 from the CIA.

Focusing attention on the HSCA records, meaning in reality only those it generated, serves the wrong purpose now of directing attention away from those still withheld by the executive agencies, where there is a greater likelihood of some fact being mixed in with the crap that was compiled in great volume, which discourages any uses of them outside the agencies at all. All we can expect from the HSCA records is disclosure of their dishonesty, incompetence, preconceptions and stupidities. As you experienced so personally and I'm sure with considerable pain, they were never interested in any real investigation or in fact.

All that I know of what agency records have come to light via FOIA tells me that there is no reason to expect any real leads on any future investigation from any of them.

However, in the course of my study of this great volume of paper so much of which is utterly worthless I have come on proof of the existence of undisclosed files. While I can't responsibly predict that they hold any significant new information about the assassination itself, this can be a possibility. The problem is that we have no way of knowing what all such files are and thus no way of compelling, even under court compulsion, their identification and processing for disclosure.

If it sounds like I am depressed or defeatist, not so. I spend time every day trying to inform others and perfect the record for history. If we can do nothing else, this is worthwhile. I regret that I am so all alone in it. All the attention and effort are on the exploitations and commercializations, the concoctions that can be made so exciting. As Stone just demonstrated to us. And as deceives and misleads and misinforms the people.

Can you begin to imagine the fiasco that will result if by some chance the Stone movie and the Garrison and Marrs' (also a best-seller now) books are used as the bells for an investigation, as the wildness and nuttiness was used to get HSCA going?

So as from the first, I see no good coming from the Stone successes and much harm from them. which is why I started the exposures of him and it. While I see no immediate benefit from the disclosure of more records, those long disclosed having been so entirely ignored, I believe that is important nonetheless, slight as the prospect of any usefulness resulting.

You misunderstood something I asked. It was not for anything you gave Stone. It was for any critical or other comment you made later.

Best wishes,

Harold